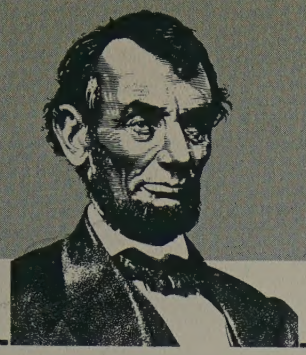

Lincoln Lore

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THE CABINET CRISIS OF DECEMBER 1862

A Senate caucus made up of ultra radical, unreasoning Republicans met in secret during the closing days of 1862 and uttered bitter words of criticism against the administration of President Abraham Lincoln. They demanded that Lincoln reorganize his cabinet, oust Secretary of State William H. Seward and elevate Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase to the top cabinet post.

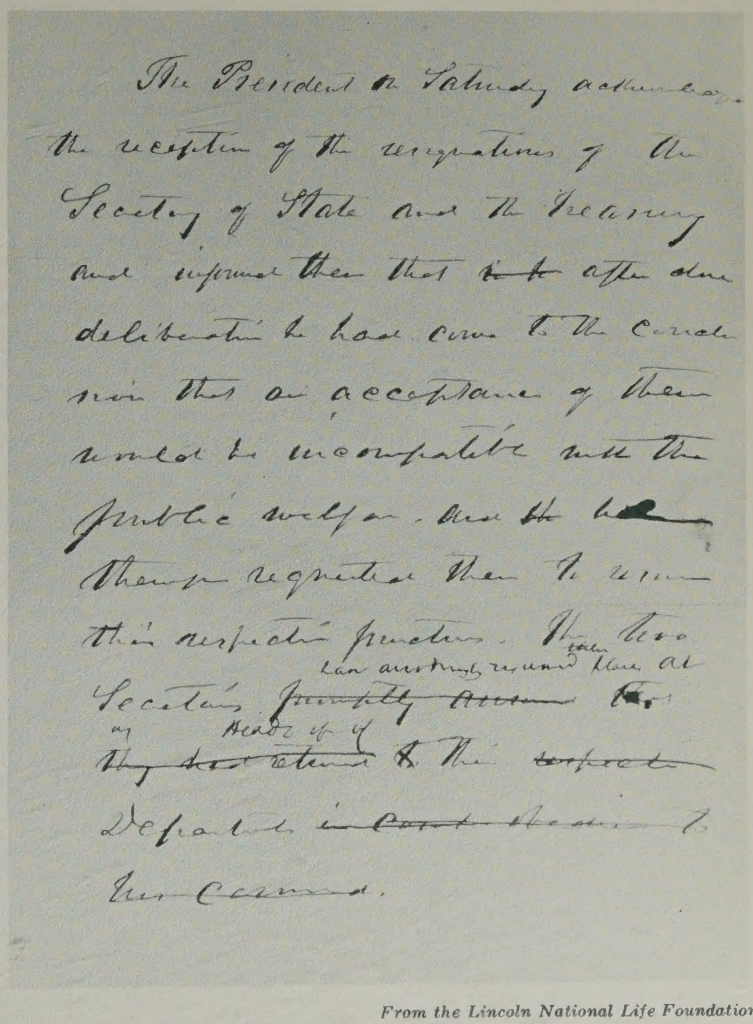
From a military-political point of view, 1862 had been a year of disaster. So at the Senate caucus on Thursday afternoon, December 18, they bitterly denounced Lincoln's policy of being "opposed to a vigorous prosecution of the war." Senator James Wilson Grimes of Iowa went so far as to advocate the creation of a Lieutenant General with absolute and despotic powers, and "he said he would never be satisfied until there was a Republican at the head of our armies." It was claimed from reliable sources that "there was a back stairs and malign influence which controlled the president and overruled all the decisions of the cabinet . . ." The implication was that the malign influence was Seward. Most of the senators who spoke against Mr. Seward were the partisans of Mr. Chase and excepted him in their assault upon Lincoln's cabinet.

Chase was at loggerheads with Seward, and the two ministers were constantly angling for power within the administration. Assuming a superior atti tude toward both Lincoln and Seward, the Treasury Secretary undoubtedly did communicate his unfavorable views of the cabinet to Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio regarding the unbusinesslike way in which Lincoln conducted cabinet meetings. Chase, in reality, was chagrined that Lincoln only consulted him on financial matters. Chase wanted to help run the entire government.

During the caucus Senator Charles Sumner moved that a committee "represent to Lincoln the necessity for a change in men and measures." These were indeed strong words to address to a president of the United States. These words were virtually a command without any implication of suggestion or advice. The resolution passed by a decided vote. The Republican senators appointed a committee of nine to wait on the president. The committee members were Jacob Collamer of Vermont, William Pitt Fessenden of New Hampshire, James Wilson Grimes of Iowa, Ira Harris of New York, Jacob M. Howard of Michigan, Samuel C. Pomeroy of Kansas, Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, Charles Summer of Massachusetts, and Ben F. Wade of Ohio. Could these senators push Lincoln around? If a Senate caucus could select the president's cabinet and subject him to a majority vote Lincoln's position would be reduced to that of a puppet.

The committee called on Lincoln on December 18 at seven o'clock in the evening. They declared in their resolutions which were read "that the only way to put down the rebellion and save the nation is a vigorous prosecution of the war." They did not name any cabinet officer or allude to anyone. They were of the opinion "that it was dangerous to have anyone in command of an army, who was not hearty in the cause and the policy above set forth."

Lincoln's Attorney-General Edward Bates in his "Diary" under the heading of December 19, 1862 recorded that, "the Prest said that he had a long conference with the committee, who seemeed (sic) earnest and sad—not malicious nor passionate—not denouncing any one, but all of them attributing to Mr. Seward a lukewarmness in the conduct of the war, and seemed to consider him the real cause of our failures. To use the Prest's quaint language, while they believed in the Prest's honesty, they seemed to think that when he had in



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Secretary of State William H. Seward's handwritten press release of December 22, 1862, possibly composed with Lincoln's help, of the president's decision not to accept the resignations of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury.

him any good purposes, Mr. Seward *contrived to suck them out of him unperceived.*"

Lincoln requested the Senate committee to return the next evening. This was perhaps the darkest hour of Lincoln's administration. Lincoln was distressed. Meanwhile, Secretary Seward had sent Lincoln his resignation by Senator Preston King on the night of December 17. The president feared, according to Bates, "that the rest of us might take it as a hint to retire also."

Lincoln rose to the occasion, although a high degree of tact was required. At a ten thirty a.m. cabinet session at which all members were present except Seward, Lincoln related the main facts of his meeting with the Senate committee. He requested them to reassemble that evening when the Senate committee would return. This proposal caused some of the members to be apprehensive, but all finally agreed to be present.

That evening at 7:30 p.m. on December 19, six cabinet members were present when the Senate Caucus Committee, without Senator Ben F. Wade, called. The meeting lasted four hours. Lincoln conducted his own case, read the Resolves of the Senators and commented with mild severity upon some of the objections set forth. Several Senators spoke, "with more or less sharpness, all directing their force against Mr. Seward."

Chase seemed to be the most uncomfortable of all present. He made some remarks about finances, and "he said he wouldn't have come if he had been expected to be arraigned here." Postmaster General Montgomery Blair came to Lincoln's assistance and talked of "the general harmony of the administration", and he defended Seward and opposed the idea that every measure and appointment should be cleared through the cabinet. Bates agreed with Blair. Senator Sumner cited some passages of Seward's published correspondence which he declared to be "unnecessary, untimely . . . untrue."

Lincoln spoke of the unity of the cabinet, stating that they could not all be expected to think alike on every subject, but that all acquiesed when once a measure was decided. The lack of time, Lincoln pointed out, did prevent frequent and long sessions of the cabinet and the submission of all measures for discussion.

Chase, while endorsing Lincoln's statement, "regretted that there was not a more full and thorough consideration and canvass of every important measure in open cabinet." Senator Collamer, the chairman of the commitee, had stated that they wanted "united counsels, combined wisdom and energetic action."

Lincoln hoped to conciliate the senators whatever may have been his opinion of their insolence. In the meeting Lincoln put each member of the cabinet on record in the presence of the senators. He next proceeded to inquire of the Senate committee if they still favored the rejection of Seward. Some were as hostile as ever; some refused to commit themselves, while Senator Harris favored the retention of Seward. Bates stated that "upon the whole, the meeting broke up in a milder spirit than (animated) it (when it) met."

The evening meeting of Friday, December 19, had embarrassed Chase to no end, and knowing that Seward had resigned he wrote out his own resignation. Once he had informed the president of this Lincoln inquired, "Where is it?" Upon receiving it from Chase he said, "This cuts the Gordian knot." In more picturesque language, Lincoln remarked, "Now I can ride ahead, I have got a pumpkin in each end of my bag."

Three pumpkins in a bag, as any horseback rider knows, is one too many, and when Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War tendered his resignation Lincoln said, "You may go to your Department. I don't want yours. This is all I want; this relieves me; my way is clear; the trouble is ended." Chase was surprised that the president actually wanted his resignation and he left the Executive Mansion a sad and dejected man.

On Saturday, December 20, wild rumors swept the capital to the effect that all the cabinet members would resign, and that new plans and programs were being advanced, and several lists of proposed cabinet members were suggested. Bates apprehensively wrote in his "Diary" under the date of December 19, that "the Prest . . . did not see how he could get along with any new cabinet, made of new materials."

On Monday, December 22, after the Senate adjourned, the ultra Republicans met to receive a report of the Senate committee that had precipitated the cabinet crisis. Senator Collamer reviewed the events of the meeting and stated that speeches were made "to prove that the cabinet did hold meetings, and did everything properly, and that there were no dissentions among them." The most astounding statement made by Senator Collamer was that Mr. Chase agreed that "the cabinet (members) were all harmonious." Senator Orville H. Browning of Illinois asked Senator Collamer "how Mr. Chase could make such a statement in the presence of Senators to whom he had said that Seward exercised a back stair and malign influence upon the President, and thwarted all the measures of the cabinet?" Collamer replied, "He lied."

William E. Barton has probably best characterized Chase in this connection in his biography "President Lincoln," published by The Bobbs-Merrill Company in 1933: "It is not easy to describe what he said and wrote without thinking him a traitor to Lincoln, and thus he has sometimes been described. That, however, is not the case. Chase simply assumed that his own superiority to Lincoln and Seward was so marked that there could be no question of his right and duty to assist the country in putting into the presidency in 1864 the man most capable of saving the country. It was not patriotism Chase lacked, but a sense of humor and propriety."

Lincoln let both Seward and Chase worry about their respective cabinet positions before making a decision. In fact, one authority strongly suspected that the two cabinet officers began to wonder if the president might not be able to get along without them. Meanwhile, several of Lincoln's associates presented him with prepared slates to assist him in forming a new cabinet. Senator Browning suggested Collamer for Secretary of State, Thomas Ewing of Ohio for Secretary of the Treasury, General Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts for Secretary of War. James Guthrie of Kentucky was also mentioned. Lincoln good humoredly accepted Browning's suggestions, but he pointed out that General John A. Dix would make a better Secretary of War than Banks. The president, however, was not so politically naive to fail to notice that Browning had left open a few cabinet positions if Lincoln should want to name him to a cabinet post.

On Monday,December 22nd, Lincoln told Browning that he was not going to appoint a new cabinet. A new cabinet, the president said, would be assailed just as the old one had been. Browning suggested that Mr. Lincoln try to "compound a cabinet as to reconcile all the elements of loyalty to the Administration." Browning then revealed to Lincoln all the elements behind the calling of the Senate Caucus—to force Lincoln to recall Chase as premier and to "form a cabinet of ultra men around him." But Lincoln told Browning with a good deal of emphasis "that he was master."

On Saturday, December 20th, Lincoln requested Mr. Seward and Mr. Chase to withdraw their resignations and again become active heads of their departments. Both men were happy to comply with this request. This action, once it was announced, took the public by surprise—especially when the ultra Republicans learned that Chase had maneuvered himself into the same unenviable position as Seward.

To apprise the public, Seward prepared a press release, possibly with the president's help, on or about Monday, December 22, 1862:

"The president on Saturday acknowledged the reception of the resignations of the Secretary of State and the Treasury and informed them that after due deliberations he had come to the conclusion that an acceptance of them would be incompatible with the public welfare, and there upon requested them to resume their respective functions. The two Secretaries have accordingly resumed their places as Heads of their Departments."

Count Adam Gurowski, a former Polish revolutionary leader and a severe critic of the Lincoln administration, recorded in his "Diary" on December 18 that "Senators" were "waking up to their duties and to the consciousness of their power. These patriots have said to Seward, *Averte Sathanas,* and overboard he goes, after having done as much evil as only *he* could do." With the public announcement that Seward would remain in the cabinet Gurowski wrote on December 22, "So, then Sathanas

(Continued on Page 4)

CHINESE RESISTANCE ISSUE
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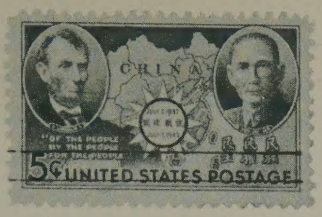


Scott No. 906

In 1942 the United States Post Office Department issued a 5 cent postage stamp to commemorate "the fifth anniversary of the resistance of the Chinese people to Japanese aggression, and as a tribute to the efforts of China to preserve the principles of free government for its people."

The central motif of the Chinese commemorative postage stamp is a contour map of China, to the left of which appears a portrait of Abraham Lincoln enclosed in an oval border, with Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese republic appearing in a similar position to the right of the map of China.

This was the first time a United States stamp ever presented a map of a foreign land. Likewise, no other United States stamp had ever carried the likeness of a president of a foreign country. However, in 1893 the United States Post Office Department did issue a series of sixteen stamps in commemoration of the World's Columbian Exposition and Queen Isabella of Spain was portrayed on six stamps of the series. Also a 3 cent Territorial Series was issued in 1937 and a statue of King Kamehameha, who first placed the Hawaiian Islands under a single sovereignty, was depicted. Then, too, no other United States stamp was ever issued which included an inscription in Chinese.

Stamp collectors are of the opinion that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had a hand in preparing the design. Not only did he particularly like vignettes of this character but it was recalled that in 1939 China had released a series of stamps to mark the sesquicentennial of the Constitution of the United States, with the American flag as a part of the design. So it is believed that in 1942 President Roosevelt and Postmaster General Walker returned the compliment, with motifs and inscriptions which would emphasize the democratic way of life which was then common to both countries.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen was an ardent admirer of the Springfield lawyer. In a reply to an inquiry as to what were his hopes for the future of China, the Chinese statesman in April 1921 sent a typewritten letter on official stationery of the president's office of the Republic of China, to Mrs. Chan Jett of New York City in which he stated, "We wish to see established in our country the system of government which the great Lincoln, in a memorable phrase, described as 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people.'"

Below the stamp portrait of Lincoln arranged in three lines, is the wording: "Of the people, by the people, for the people." In a similar position under the portrait of Sun Yat-sen are three columns of Chinese ideographs representing literally the same quotation from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Between the portraits, on the contour map is a design of the sun, with triangular rays representing the national symbol taken from the flag of China. Within the sun on two horizontal lines are the dates of "July 7, 1937" and "July 7, 1942" between which are four Chinese characters (Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's war motto) meaning, "Fight the War and Build the Country." The significance of the dates is that they denote the fifth anniversary of Chinese resistance.

The stamp measures 84/100 x 1 44/100 inches. It is arranged horizontally and is printed in blue by the rotary process and issued in sheets of 50. The denomination "5¢" is shown in the lower left corner of the stamp which is followed by a horizontal line of wording "United States Postage." Except for the inscription under the two portraits all the lettering is dark. The portraits of Lincoln and Sun Yat-sen were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin. The vignette was engraved by Leo C. Kauffman.

This commemorative stamp was first placed on sale at Denver, Colorado, on July 7, 1942. It was on October 11, 1911, while at Denver, Colorado, that Dr. Sun Yat-sen received word that his efforts to free China had finally succeeded and that he should return to China immediately, for the purpose of building the republic. Dr. Sun Yat-sen died in 1925.

A first-day cover from Postmaster General Frank C. Walker to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, addressed to the latter at the Chinese capital in Chungking, China, was the first to be cancelled as the new Chinese commemorative postage stamp went on sale at Denver. In his message to the Chinese leader, enclosed in the first-day cover, postmaster General Walker said, in part:

"It is the purpose of this stamp to express the admiration of the United States for the courageous resistance of the Chinese Nation to military aggression, and to focus attention upon the cause to which we are jointly dedicated—'that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'"

United States Post Office Department:
Postage Stamps of the United States 1847-1955.
Lincoln Lore No. 693, "The Abraham Lincoln-Sun Yat-sen Postage Stamp", July 20, 1942.

LINCOLN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTOR—1840

A fragment of an interesting original manuscript pertaining to the number of votes Abraham Lincoln received in the Orville precinct of Scott County, Illinois, for Whig presidential elector has long been in the possession of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

Election officials certified that "at an election held in the house of Daniel Pike in the Orville precinct in the county of Scott (west of Morgan County which borders on Sangamon County) and state of Illinois on the second day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty the following named persons received the number of votes annexed to their respective names for the following described offices to wit: Buckner S. Morris, Samuel D. Marshall, Edwin B. Webb, Cyrus Walker, Abraham Lincoln each received forty-six votes for the office of Electors of president and vice president of the U. S."

The Democratic candidates for the position of elector are likewise recorded on the document: "Adam W. Snyder, Isaac P. Walker, John W. Eldridge, John A. McClernand, James Ralston each received forty-one votes for the office of Electors of president and vice president of the United States."

Following the report of the election officials (the names have disappeared due to the fragile condition of the manuscript) which appears on one side of one page, a second sheet accompanies the document listing the votes of fifty-six of the eighty-seven men that voted in the precinct. Daniel Pike in whose home the election was held, and who was the sixth person in the precinct to exercise the right of suffrage voted for the five Whig electoral candidates.

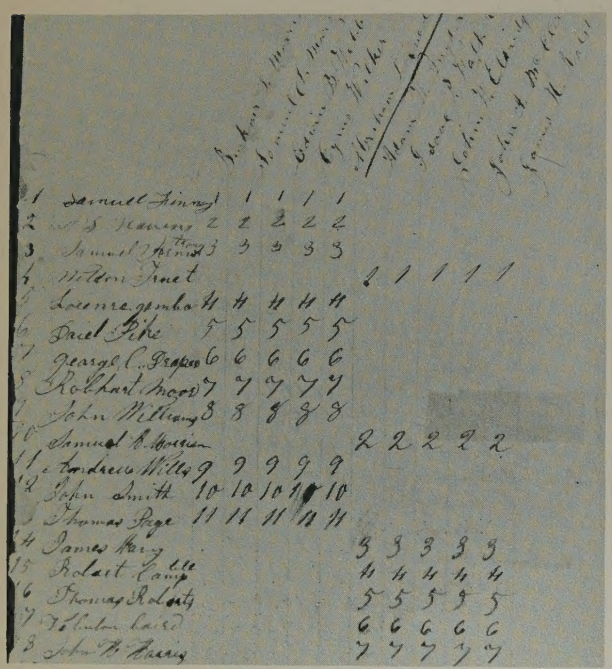
The Whig and Democratic tickets are separated on the manuscript by a line drawn between the names of Abraham Lincoln and Adam W. Snyder. The vote totals were carried forward as the voters appeared at the polls and there was no splitting of the ticket.

There is no record that Lincoln voted in the presidential election held on November 2, 1840. However, as an electoral candidate he did more stumping for Harrison and Tyler than in any other previous campaign. Not one of his campaign speeches have been preserved but he did speak all over the state for "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." Lincoln made an extensive canvass through southern Illinois and he appeared before a conclave of 15,000 Whigs, many of them coming to Springfield from as far north as Chicago. Democrats were also quite active in the promotion of Martin Van Buren's candidacy and Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas often publicly debated the issues.

Lincoln the year before had sponsored a Whig State Convention which met in October 1839, and he had been placed on the State Central Committee in January of 1840. In this capacity Lincoln carried on considerable correspondence with key leaders urging party organization, with the counties divided up into "small districts" and a "perfect list of all the voters" in the hands of the sub-committee members.

The political arguments set forth by Lincoln in this campaign in favor of a United States Bank, which was the principal national issue, were perhaps best stated in a *Sangamon Journal* report of May 15, 1840 of his Tremont, Illinois debate in which Douglas, William L. May and William Thomas participated: ". . . the debate was opened by Mr. Lincoln, who after some general and appropriate remarks concerning the design and object of all Governments, drew a vivid picture of our prosperous and happy condition previous to the time of the war which was waged against the U. S. Bank, the constitutionality, as well as the great utility of which he vindicated in a most triumphant manner. He next turned his attention to the Sub-Treasury, the hideous deformity and injurious effects of which were exposed in a masterly style."

The *Sangmon Journal* report also stated that, "Mr. Lincoln was particularly felicitous, and the frequent and spontaneous bursts of applause from the people, gave evidence that their hearts were with him. He related many highly amusing anecdotes which convulsed the house with laughter; and concluded his eloquent address with



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Fragment of original manuscript used by election officials to record the vote in the Orville Precinct of Scott County, Illinois during the presidential election of 1840.

a successful vindication of the civil and military reputation of the Hero of Tippecanoe."

Mr. Lincoln's vigorous political activities led to a mild altercation with W. G. Anderson of Lawrenceville, during the latter half of October while he was actively campaigning in the southern counties of Illinois. On October 30 Anderson wrote Lincoln: "On our first meeting on Wednesday last, a difficulty in words, ensured between us, which I deem it my duty to notice further. I think you were the aggressor. Your words imported insult; and whither you meant them as such is for you to say. You will therefore please inform me on this point and if you designed to offend, please communicate to me your present feelings on the subject, and whether you persist in the stand you took."

Lincoln answered Anderson from Lawrenceville on October 31: "Your note of yesterday is received. In the difficulty between us, of which you speak, you say you think I was the aggressor. I do not think I was. You say my 'words imported insult.' I meant them as a fair set-off to your own statements, and not otherwise; and in that light alone I now wish you to understand them. You ask for my 'present' feeling on the subject. I entertain no unkind feeling to you, and none of any sort upon the subject, except a sincere regret that I permitted myself to get into such an altercation."

Despite campaign oratory, political organization, and the use of log cabin and cider barrel symbols, the Whigs in Illinois were defeated on November 2, 1840 by almost 2,000 votes out of a total of 93,179. Sangamon County, however, voted Whig by a large majority and Lincoln was elected to the legislature for the fourth time. Lincoln, perhaps, was consoled, even after expending so much effort, with the Whig national victory.

During the bitter campaign Whigs had charged the Democrats with fraud in voting. However, after the election and with the legislature overwhelmingly Democratic, the leaders restated their election slogan that: "the Federalists (Whigs) are not to be trusted. By fraud alone they expect to succeed." It was Lincoln's remarks in the Illinois legislature on the so-called election frauds that emphasized the most ludicrous Democratic charge of all. McClernand a Democrat, had reported that a steamboat had plied up and down the Wabash River on election day voting a large number of Whigs in every port town they stopped. Lincoln in answer to McClernand stated that "he was near the Wabash at the time and place mentioned by the gentleman, and after making diligent inquiry for a Steam Boat, could hear of none."

Lincoln could truthfully say that he was near the Wabash on election day. He was selected to bring the returns of Lawrence County to Springfield to be filed with the Secretary of State, and from all indications Lincoln was in the vicinity of the town of Lawrenceville, situated about ten miles from the Wabash River on election day.

However, these post election Democratic charges of fraud were not without a purpose. The Democratic alien vote (canal laborers) was in jeopardy by a Whig effort of judicial disenfranchisement, and men like Douglas and McClernand were quick to seize control of the political situation to save the support of the Irish laborer of the "Canal Zone."

CABINET CRISIS 1862

(Continued from Page 2)

Seward remains, and Mr. Lincoln scorns the advice of the wisest and most patriotic Senators."

Still smarting over Seward's victory, Gurowski recorded in his "Diary" under the date of December 24, "Lincoln has now become accustomed to Seward, as the hunchback is to his protuberance." Chase, according to Gurowski, was a "passive patriot." As for Chase the diarist wrote: "Faugh! I hereby brand him, and leave him to the bitter judgment of all men who can conscientiously claim to be even *half honest.*"

However, despite the rantings of critics the important result of the cabinet crisis of 1862 was that Lincoln come out of the episode without a curtailment of his own leadership and without a breakdown of the governmental structure.

INDIANA MEMORIAL

During the May term, 1865, of the Supreme Court of The State of Indiana, on the Announcement of the Death of Abraham Lincoln, three Resolutions were "spread upon the records":

1. Resolved, That the death of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, is a great national calamity, which nearly and profoundly touches the whole people; that his patient labor and ability, his gentleness and mercy, his unsectional patriotism, and his catholic humanity, are qualities which the country could not at any time ill afford to lose; and which, in times like the present, it will be difficult to replace.
2. Resolved, That his example, in all the stages of his life, is worthy of imitation by his countrymen, and affords, at the same time, for their encouragement, an assurance that the faithful continuance in well doing will, even in this life, lead to honorable distinction and rewards.
3. Resolved, That we tender to the family of the illustrious dead our heartfelt condolence in this night of their affliction and sorrow".

In response to these resolutions, Justice J. Frazer eulogized the late president. The resolutions and eulogy are to be found in Volume 24 of the Indiana Reports, pages 521-527.

These resolutions are perhaps the only ones ever acted upon by an Indiana Court for a President of the United States.